

Issue Brief – Staffing Statewide Programs and Functions

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION – OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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SUMMARY

The Utah State Office of Education (USOE) functions as support staff to the State Board of Education and the State Superintendent of Public Instruction. Further, USOE staff also support many functions in the school districts and provide statewide program support and administration. The State Board of Education has requested additional full time staff to assist in these statewide support functions.

OBJECTIVE

This brief details staffing concerns at the State Office of Education expressed by the State Board of Education. These concerns include hiring additional staff to provide support to key programs and address employee turnover through providing salary adjustments for the specialists at the USOE.

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

Education Specialists at the State Office of Education provide state-wide support to the school districts and charter schools. The State Board of Education has identified three areas where additional staff support is required. Further, the Board has identified the turnover of professional staff at the USOE as a concern. The following sections provide further detail on these matters.

Assistant USBE Internal Auditor

The State Board of Education employs one full-time auditor to conduct reviews of the many programs, issues, and process system. The Board indicates that three of the last audits conducted by the Board's auditor resulted in litigation. Audit portion of the auditor's time.

The Board requests an appropriation of \$70,000 in ongoing Uniform School Fund revenue to hire a full-time assistant for the Board's auditor. An additional auditor will allow the Board to conduct more audits and better evaluate program performance and compliance by the districts. The Board is responsible for an education budget that may reach \$3 billion in FY 2007. Two full time auditors may help the Board better oversee the implementation of this revenue and the compliance to regulations placed on these funds.

Recommendation: The Analyst recommends that the subcommittee discuss the need for an additional auditor for the State Board of Education. The subcommittee may wish to include \$70,000 in Uniform School Funds in its prioritized list of funding requests.

Pre-Kindergarten Specialist

With recent emphasis on the impact pre-kindergarten and full-day kindergarten have on student performance, the State Board of Education requests funding to hire a full-time Pre-Kindergarten specialist at the State Office of Education. According to the State Board, "research indicates that high-quality pre-kindergarten programs are essential for providing students in poverty with the necessary skills for successful transition to kindergarten."¹

A pre-kindergarten specialist would assist school districts with pre-kindergarten programs and help school districts impacted by poverty develop a pre-kindergarten program. The Board requests an ongoing Uniform School Fund appropriation of \$150,000 to hire this specialist. This position would be responsible for the oversight and implementation of the proposed Pre-K School Preparation Program.

Recommendation: The subcommittee may wish to evaluate and prioritize the request for \$150,000 in ongoing Uniform School Fund revenue to hire a Pre-Kindergarten specialist at the State Office of Education.

¹ Utah State Board of Education. FY 2007 Budget Request. September 2, 2005.

***Special Needs Scholarship Administration – \$112,000
General Fund***

During the 2005 General Session, the Legislature passed H.B. 249 “Carson Smith Special Needs Scholarships.” This bill created a program to support students who have special needs students to attend a private school. The Legislature appropriated \$100,000 in one-time General Fund revenue to support this program.

The Carson Smith Special Needs Scholarship program was funded with one-time funds, but the program is ongoing. The State Board of Education hired a full-time specialist to oversee the implementation of this program.

Recommendation: The Analyst recommends that the subcommittee prioritize \$112,000 in ongoing General Fund revenue to support the ongoing administrative functions associated with the Carson Smith Special Needs Scholarship program.

World Language Specialist

With the recent emphasis on the world languages in schools the Utah State Office of Education requests funding to hire a full time World Languages and Foreign Exchange Specialist. This specialist will provide additional capacity at the USOE to support students, teachers, and districts in coordination in foreign language instruction in schools. This position would also assist in the development of programs in critical needs language (e.g. Chinese, Arabic) This person will also administer the foreign exchange student program.

Recommendation: The Analyst recommends that the subcommittee prioritize \$136,000 in ongoing Uniform School Fund revenue to hire a World Language Specialist.

Electronic High School Support Staff

It has been determined that No Child Left Behind funding may not be appropriate for Electronic High School staff support. This request from the Utah State Office of Education is to replace No Child Left Behind with monies from the Uniform School Fund.

Recommendation: The Analyst recommends that the subcommittee prioritize \$42,100 in ongoing Uniform School Fund revenue to support Electronic High School Staff.

LEGISLATIVE ACTION

This section provides a guide of what actions might be taken if the Legislature wishes to adopt the recommendations of this brief. The Analyst recommends the Legislature:

1. Consider prioritizing the Board’s request to hire an assistant auditor among the other items before the subcommittee. This position will require an appropriation of \$70,000 in ongoing Uniform School Fund revenue to the State Board of Education.
2. Evaluate the need for a Pre-Kindergarten specialist at the Utah State Office of Education, and prioritize the requested \$150,000 in ongoing Uniform School Fund revenue among the other items before the subcommittee.
3. Prioritize \$112,000 in ongoing General Fund revenue to support the administration of the Carson Smith Special Needs Scholarship program.
4. Evaluate the need for a World Language Specialist at the Utah State Office of Education, and prioritize the requested \$136,000 in ongoing Uniform School Fund revenue among the other items before the subcommittee.
5. Prioritize \$42,100 in ongoing Uniform School Fund revenue to support the Electronic High School staff.